



INFORM



December 2019



Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • *Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful*

Congratulations Central Beacons Mountain Rescue Team

Congratulations to Merthyr Tydfil-based Central Beacons Mountain Rescue Team (CBMRT) who recently won the Volunteer Team of the Year at WCVA's new Charity Awards in November.

CBMRT operates a 999, 24-hour service in the Brecon Beacons National Park, 365 days of the year. This includes Pen y Fan, and the waterfalls of Ystradfellte, as well as the urban areas of Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly and Newport.

CBMRT is one of the busiest mountain rescue teams in the UK, responding to 124 callouts last year alone. In addition to the more traditional mountain incidents, they also provide a community-based resource in rural and urban areas. This includes taking on a leading role in the search of vulnerable people, including older people, children and young people, who have wandered away from safe environments.

They also support the local community in times of extreme weather, transporting district medical staff to home visits; helping ambulance paramedics reach casualties who otherwise couldn't be reached; animal rescue; light and major plane crashes and police investigations - virtually any incident where a highly trained team can be of assistance.

In November 2017, CBMRT suffered a devastating fire at their Dowlais rescue base destroying vital equipment. Utilising each member's strength, the team formed specialist working groups, each producing plans for how CBMRT could rebuild itself. Nearly two years later, CBMRT members continue to work together as one unit to help those in need and working to rebuild what the fire destroyed. To date they have replaced all equipment, including three rescue vehicles.

Penny Brockman, Team Leader said *"To be nominated as finalists, as a team we feel extremely proud and honoured. To have become winners of the award after hearing all the fantastic stories and achievements of the other finalists is really humbling. For us as a team, this recognition highlights the incredibly huge and sustained effort put in by team members, not only to help us continue our recovery from the fire devastation at our base, but also the drive and commitment to continue providing the search and rescue service across South, Mid & West Wales, on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a weeks. We're incredibly proud and grateful."*

Congratulations also to Stephens and George Charitable Trust who were runners up in the Organisation of the Year category.



Welcome to the December edition of Inform in 2019. Our aim is to provide our members with up to date news and information and we welcome contributions and feedback from all readers of this newsletter.



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YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

If you could like to include an article, news item or Focus on your group in the next edition, contact VAMT enquiries for more information: enquiries@vamt.net.

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Adverts/Inserts policy

In each Inform we are able to insert adverts and up to 5 different leaflets from member or other organisations. We have a rate card for private agencies who wish to advertise or place inserts and prices start for £25. There is also a rate card for voluntary organisations for charges covering pre-printed inserts and inserts that need to be copied. Contact VAMT enquiries@vamt.net



@VAMTtweets

@VAMTvolunteer



Focus on Environment and Green Spaces Network

INFORM

The Environment and Green Spaces Network was established in 2017 following requests from a number of local environmental groups who wished to come together and share experiences. It is primarily a virtual network, however it has held meetings to showcase projects and discuss issues such as the Valleys Regional Park.

It is primarily a third sector network and is made up of organisations and community groups concerned with environmental and conservation issues. In early October, the Network facilitated a field trip to visit several community and local authority run green spaces within the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, following a request from members.

The trip included a visit to the Woodland Walk at **Royal Crescent Allotments** in Penydarren (featured in the September's Focus on). The group are happy to host visitors either as a working group or for a tour. The site is open 9am until 3pm April to October and you can contact Robert Hamilton with queries or to arrange a visit:
robert.hamilton11@btinternet.com



At **Dowlais Community Centre** Helen Hughes told how the Stephens and George Charitable Trust acquired the site, improved it with grant support and now run it sustainably. The group has focussed on training members, hosting activities and improving the garden space for all to enjoy. Contact: **charity1@stephensandgeorge.co.uk**

Now managed by the **Pant, Dowlais and Penywern Action Group**, **Dowlais Infants Garden** has recently been restored. They hold a monthly litter pick across the ward and regularly maintain

small green spaces too. The space is only open to the public during the Summer, otherwise its used by the school and for prearranged trips.



At **Parc Taff Bargoed** Ai-Lin gave the group a tour of the park and spoke about the many wildlife friendly initiatives that have taken place and the various family-focussed activities that continue to take place. Contact: **Ai-Lin.Kee@merthyr.gov.uk**



At **Treharris Park**, Lark in the Park, also featured in September's Inform, has recently been meeting to carry out planting and social activities. The group were told about recent efforts to control invasive species on the site and improving the park entrance in the context of limited resources.

The group also visited Merthyr and Gelligaer Common – for further information on the Common see page 19.

A recent survey has shown that Forum members are keen to meet more often, and to discuss different ways of working. Watch this space for further information.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES | Ymddiriedolaeth GIG
Gwasanaethau Ambiwlians Cymru
Welsh Ambulance Services
NHS Trust

Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust Volunteer Car Service (VCS) Driver

The role is to undertake non-emergency planned patient journeys conveying patients who can walk unaided or with minimum assistance. The role is required to transport patients safely between their place of residence and designated treatment centres and clinics. To provide care and assistance, within the level of training received and adhere to the Trust code of Conduct and Standards of Professional behaviour. Volunteers need to hold a current driving licence with a maximum of 3 endorsement points and no convictions for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

TGP Cymru Independent Visitor Service



Are you interested in giving some of your time as a volunteer to work with vulnerable young people? As an Independent Visitor you will be teamed up with a particular young person, who you will befriend and visit on a regular basis. Volunteers are needed to cover Bridgend, RCT and Merthyr.

The overall aim of TGP Cymru is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people 'looked after' or 'in need', and enable them to have a voice in decisions, which affect their lives. By providing Independent Visitors (IVs), TGP Cymru aims to improve the quality of life for children and young people who are 'looked after', provide adult role models who are external to the system and contribute to the safeguards to protect children and young people 'looked after' in addition to assisting them have their voice heard. The relationship between Independent Visitor and the child requires long term commitment, where the IV is linked to a child, as their friend and supporter.

You will receive training, support and expenses for travel and activities. You must be 18 or over, reliable and able to communicate well with young people.

© SMT Cymru Tel: 01685 353999 Email: hm@smt.org.uk
Funded via the ICF Community Capacity Grant Scheme

Reconnect 50+ is a mentoring project delivered by trained volunteers who offer a 12-week mentoring contract. Clients are assisted in making a plan towards life changing goals via small achievable steps.

Various volunteer roles are available including

- Become a trained mentor
- Activity Leader
- Activity Support
- Administration support.

Volunteers are offered a robust training programme, supervision and out of pocket expenses. Volunteers must be 18 years or above.

Free Training on the new Volunteering Wales website

Have you thought about what the new Volunteering Wales Website could do for your organisation?

Do you need help recruiting volunteers?

Would you like the tools to be able to use the new "Volunteering Wales" website?

Come along for advice and guidance on how to register your organisation, promote your volunteering opportunities and manage your volunteers on our brand new digital platform.

Wednesday 15 January 10:30 – 3:30pm at the Voluntary Action Centre

For further information on the training and all the above opportunities, plus many more, contact **Frances Barry** on **01685 353901** or **frances.barry@vamt.net**

Lloyds Bank Foundation visit to Merthyr Tydfil

Harriet Ballance of Lloyds Bank Foundation recently visited Merthyr Tydfil - here's what she had to say about her visit:

Lloyds Bank Foundation are really excited to be initiating some focused work in Merthyr Tydfil, which looks at how we can bring people together from across sectors and communities to look at how we can best ensure that services for people facing complex social issues can have a positive future. This work is a bit different to our usual grant funding work, as it isn't about grant making, but rather it's about how we can support partners in local areas to build positive relationships and shift things at a fundamental level. This involves partners from across the system – those who fund services, those who deliver them, and importantly the crucial voluntary and community sector organisations who are working on the frontline in their communities to make a difference.

I've recently come to work for Lloyds Bank Foundation in a new role, where I am leading on the work I have described above in six local areas across England and Wales, of which Merthyr is the only one in Wales. Before this role, I had been leading small charities for the last few years, so I know only too well many of the challenges people are facing in keeping organisations going in a tough climate. I'm really excited to be able to lead this work and try to address some of those challenges so that people can continue to access the support they need, when they need it.

We are in the initial stages of this work in Merthyr Tydfil and so I visited the area with my colleague Nebiat Tefera Abebe between the 18th and 20th November (if you happened to see someone



wandering around in a bright yellow coat then that was probably me!). We very much enjoyed the three days we spent getting to know the area, and some of its organisations and people. The commitment and tenacity of charities and community activists in the area is incredible, and yet it is evident that a great deal of strain has been placed on services and communities, and that cuts in public spending have hit the area really hard.

We were really grateful to be supported by Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil in organising this visit and helping us meet a range of organisations. We're incredibly grateful too, to the people and organisations we met, who took time out of their busy schedules to sit and discuss their organisations and the challenges and strengths of the areas they are working in. Nebiat and I have both come away with lots to reflect on, and with some really valuable understanding and insights that will help us to shape this work with our partners across the area.

Our next steps are to facilitate a workshop in the New Year with partners from across sectors, in order to agree a focus for the work. We're really looking forward to visiting again and continuing to get to know the area, and getting started on the work. Watch this space!

Three sisters end a decade of volunteering

Recently three of the original committee of Pentrebach and Abercanaid Old Age Association, sisters Mary Maycock, Sylvia O'Neill and Pam Connick, retired after 10 years of volunteering with the Association. A presentation evening was held to mark their retirement, the group would like to thank them for their commitment over the years.



Bevan Foundation to explore fair work and key ingredients for the foundational economy

The Bevan Foundation has been successful in getting approval for two new projects through the Welsh Government's Foundational Economy Challenge Fund. One of the projects, in partnership with the Wales TUC, will bring together employers, employees and their representative bodies, along with economic agencies and researchers to find solutions to growing fair work in four sectors: accommodation and food (including food manufacturing), social care, retail and arts and entertainment.

Fair work, including decent pay, job security, worker voice and rights can help to achieve a stronger economy, reduce poverty and promote well-being. However, in some foundational economy sectors fair work is lacking. For example, workers in accommodation and food on median weekly earnings are paid half the wage of the all-industry average, while trade union membership is just 2.9% of employees compared to 30% of employees nationally.

The second project will investigate the key ingredients and circumstances for growing the everyday economy in parts of the valleys. Some places are experiencing growth in the foundational economy, with new retailing, tourist businesses, cafes and hairdressers developing. However, some towns and villages are experiencing a contraction, with banks, post offices, shops, bus services, libraries and community centres closing. These variations suggest that some communities may be better placed than others to grasp the potential.

This project will look at the pre-conditions for growing the foundational economy in three communities in the three local authority areas of: Merthyr Tydfil (Treharris), Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

For places that do not have the essential pre-conditions, identifying what's needed will help to make the most of the foundational economy in these areas. Similarly, for places that do have the potential to maximise the opportunities, they may need different things to make the most of the potential. Understanding these places and circumstances better can help ensure that policies and resources are targeted well and that the potential of the foundational economy is maximised.

If you would like to find out more about either project, please contact **Helen Cunningham** on **01685 350938** or email helen.cunningham@bevanfoundation.org



Citizens Advice Merthyr Tydfil - Supporting People Project

At Citizens Advice Merthyr Tydfil we are providing support for people who are impacted by Welfare Benefit Reforms and the introduction of Universal Credit.

Our service is:

Independent – we will always act in the interests of our clients, without influence from any outside bodies.

Impartial – we don't judge our clients or make assumptions about them. Our service is open to everyone, and we treat everyone equally.

Confidential – we won't pass on anything a client tells us – or even the fact that they've visited us – without their permission.

Free – no-one has to pay for any part of the service we provide.

We have a team of six advisers who are trained to support the public in dealing with welfare benefit and money management. The aim of the project is to enable people to maintain their home and live an independent life.

We can assist anyone from Merthyr Tydfil who requires assistance or advice with their benefit, debt or housing issues. If you want to find out more about how you can access the project, please speak to **Ryan Price 01685 382188 (Extension code: 219)**

Running for Bridging the Gap

Bridging the Gap Youth is a community enterprise that provides After School Youth Club for young people aged 8-19 and is fully inclusive of young people with specific needs. The project currently operates Monday – Thursday 3.00pm- 5.30pm with free pickups from Greenfield School. Whilst at the club, young people have the opportunity to take part in a variety of activities such as computers, cookery, sports, art & crafts, gardening, music and games. We also have daily offsite sensory sessions at Cwm Golau Integrated Centre Pentrebach.

We aim to offer a range of play and learning activities in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Children are encouraged to participate in the planning of activities and the types of equipment used. Where possible the environment, activities and play opportunities are made accessible for children with specific needs.

In addition to after school provision we also provide Holiday Club provision during school holidays when the project operates Monday – Thursday 10am – 4.00pm. During school holidays young people have the opportunity to participate in off site visits.

As a group we are always looking to raise valuable funds to help us sustain the project whilst enabling the young people to reach their full potential. In September, we were very fortunate to have received £1077.01 sponsorship money as a result of one of our former employees Michael Coombes completing the Cardiff 10K. Michael was a valued member of staff at Bridging the Gap Youth for over 7 years and he has still had an impact by helping us raise much needed funds. The photographs were taken when Michael took

time out of his busy schedule to visit us at October half term to tell us why he decided to fundraise for us

I completed in the Cardiff 10K Run on September 1st 2019. Prior to the run I trained intensely for three weeks to prepare as this was something I wanted to achieve for myself and become confident in my abilities. I met with the young people and showed them photographs of the event along with a map of the route. They all held the medal and took a photo with it. I was so proud that I was able to support Bridging the Gap Youth as a former employee who's gained so many skills and built confidence over the last 8 years I wanted to give something back to them."



Christmas Came Early for Credit Union



We've had a busy few weeks at Merthyr Tydfil Credit Union, from celebrating International Credit Union Day to launching our new 'PrizeSaver' scheme.

International Credit Union Day took place on the 17th October, with our annual theme being 'Christmas'. This year we 'decked the halls' with tinsel, wore Christmas jumpers, shared mince pies with our members and sang traditional carols... all in October!

Our festive spirit did not go unnoticed, as our office and staff appeared on ITV Wales News later that evening showing the benefits of being financially prepared for Christmas. If you missed our big day, you can always pop into our office and see the decorations for yourself!

Alongside spreading the Christmas cheer, we became the first Credit Union in Wales to launch a HM Treasury 'PrizeSaver' Scheme on the same



day. This new account offers you the chance to win money whilst saving. Every £1 saved is 1 entry into a prize draw. Draws will be held monthly, with big prizes up for grabs such as £5,000 every month!

We're excited to see the outcome of the first draw, which is taking place in December and if you are interested in joining, don't hesitate to give us a call on; **01685 377888** or pop into our office at **139 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8DN.**

Volunteer Receives Rotary Recognition

The Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil gave its highest honour, a Paul Harris Fellowship for service to the community, to Maria Price from Thomastown.



Rotary 
Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil
South Wales. UK RI Dist 1150

A retired staff nurse from Prince Charles Hospital she has raised tens of thousands of pounds for cancer treatment equipment and specifically for our own local charity Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil. Maria can often be seen, inside our major stores, pinning on red bows to raise funds for charity.

This award was presented at a special presentation evening in October when Dr S.Ganesh also received a 45 year long service certificate for his service to Rotary International. Pictures attached showing both with President Tony Williams and also Maria Price selling her red bows.





Merthyr Housing
Where People
Come First

Tai Merthyr
Lle Daw Pobl
yn Gyntaf

Fit and Fed

Fit and Fed Merthyr Tydfil is a union of cross sector organisations, working collaboratively to address the issues of holiday hunger, lack of physical activity and isolation faced by young people during the school holidays. Working across key holiday periods, the project delivers a range of activities that get young people active through

sport and physical activity, music, drama, dance and art. The project works with participants to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of healthy eating. Young people are involved with the planning, preparation and cooking of the meals and snacks that are provided, developing their ability to follow recipes and share these with their family.

Fit and Fed is delivered across eight sites in Merthyr Tydfil. The sharing of skills, knowledge and resources is a positive example of what can be achieved when applying an asset based community development approach to a local issue. Through this approach, young people are empowered to have a voice in shaping the project and ensuring that they are involved with the planning and delivery of this within their community.

Over Whitsun and the six week summer holidays, the project has engaged with 622 different children and young people, who have accessed the project 1874 times. In this time, 1810 meals have been prepared and 2164 healthy snacks have been provided. Over 100 young people attended a beach sport festival this summer at Aberafan, where they all had the opportunity to work with national governing bodies such as Welsh Athletics, Welsh Netball and Glamorgan Cricket. As well as developing the sporting ability, the day provided a refreshing visit to the beach, with most of the day being spent paddling in the sea and building sand castles.

Should you want to access the project, Fit and Fed sites are run in the following clubs/organisation:

- Treharris Boys and Girls Club
- The Willows Centre Troedryhiw
- Georgetown Boys and Girls Club
- The Gellideg Foundation
- Dowlais Engine House
- 3Gs Youth Project
- The MIA Team
- Barnardo's Young Carers

Alternatively, you can contact **Bethan Thomas** on **01685 352839** or **bthomas@mtha.org.uk**



High Sheriff Youth Community Awards

The High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan Youth Community Awards were set up in 2008 when finance was pledged by local firms, organisations and individuals in the County to support young people who were volunteering.

The idea behind the scheme was to encourage community spirit and financially reward individuals and groups who have shown commitment and given of their time and effort; taking part in initiatives which stand out as being over and above what could normally be expected.

The success of the Awards has led to additional sponsorship and again this year a first prize of £1,000 will be made, together with other financial rewards.

Applications are invited from young people between the ages of 11 and 21, and also a group of young people again between 11 and 21, who have helped their local neighbourhood, an individual, family member or local organisation. The closing date is 31 January 2020.

If you require any further information please email the High Sheriff Awards Panel email address highsheriffmidglamorganawards@gmail.com or telephone **Mary Squire** on **0771 858 4764**

Launch of new Translation Service: Lingo Soar

Due to the growing demand for our community translation service, we are now in a position to expand. Our service is a community investment and we are delighted to bring you Lingo Soar.

We provide you with accurate translations for a reasonable price within your time-frame. Whether you're a micro-business needing to translate a small poster, or a larger public body needing to translate a lengthy document, we can accommodate you. We will keep you in the loop throughout the process, ensuring you always get a product that's fit for publication.

We have the technology and know-how to provide simultaneous translation as well as written documents. Our experienced staff are verified members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters. We are experienced professional proof-readers and can offer bespoke services to accommodate your needs.

Lingo Soar offers translation for a bilingual community. Our expanding business works throughout Wales, investing in creating resources and opportunities for the people of Merthyr Tydfil.

Lansiad Gwasanaeth Cyfieithu newydd: Lingo Soar

Daeth Lingo Soar i fodolaeth oherwydd y galw cynyddol am ein gwasanaeth cyfieithu cymunedol. Mae elw'r gwasanaeth yn bwydo i mewn i waith Canolfan Soar sy'n hybu a hyrwyddo'r Gymraeg yn ardal Merthyr Tudful.

Rydym yn ymfalchïo yng nghywirdeb ein cyfieithiadau, a hynny yn brydlon ac am bris rhesymol. Rydym yn gweithio ar brosiectau eang ac amrywiol e.e posterï syml i fusnesau bychain neu ddogfennau hirfaith, swyddogol i gyrff cyhoeddus. Rydym yn hoffi bod yn hyblyg er mwyn diwallu anghenion ein hamrywiol gleientiaid. Mae'n bwysig i ni ein bod

yn cadw mewn cysylltiad gyda'n cleientiaid drwy'r broses er mwyn sicrhau bod y gwaith sy'n cael ei ddychwelyd gennym yn ateb y gofynion ac yn barod i'w gyhoeddi yn syth. Yn ogystal â dogfennau ysgrifenedig, mae gennym offer cyfieithu ar y pryd a'r arbenigedd i gynnig y gwasanaeth hwn o'r safon uchaf.

Cynigia Lingo Soar gyfieithu i gymdeithas ddwyieithog; yn gweithio ar hyd a lled Cymru yn buddsoddi mewn creu adnoddau a chyfleodd i bobl Merthyr Tudful.

Every story is important



University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru

Last year people across Wales shared an incredible 473 stories with Measuring the Mountain. Stories that highlighted the complex and very personal nature of being a carer and of using care and support services. These stories helped to paint a picture of what social care is really like for people.

We are hugely grateful to everyone who shared stories with us. Even though not every story featured in the final report, every one of them was read, every one of them was analysed and every one of them contributed to the findings, conclusions and recommendations made by the project.

MtM presented these findings to Welsh Government earlier this year. You can find our full report, including our recommendations, on our website www.mtm.wales/resources.

Welsh Government will be issuing a formal response to the findings of the first year of work this autumn. We will share this response when we receive it and publish it on our website – you can follow us on Twitter @mtmwales to keep up to date with all the latest news and events.

Since then, we have received further funding for the project to continue its work until October 2020.

In September, MtM formed part of the agenda at the National Social Care Conference 2019. This is an important event, especially for leaders from across the social care sector working to transform the provision of services in Wales. On Day 2 of the

conference, Katie Cooke shared MtM's findings and recommendations from 2018. Katie, outlined some of the factors that contributed to people's experiences being positive or negative with around 130 social care professionals, local authority cabinet members and people from Welsh Government.

This current phase of the project will focus on gathering further stories, hosting a second Citizens' Jury in May 2020 and continuing to share the findings from the first phase. To help further build the picture of what being a carer or of using care and support services is really like, we are asking you to share stories with us again. You can do this by going online and clicking the link on our website – www.mtm.wales/share-my-story - or you can invite Katie (Katie.cooke@southwales.ac.uk) to visit a group you are part of to hear stories.

MtM would love to hear from people who contributed last time and from people who are new to contributing. Every story is important, every story tells us something valuable and every story could help shape the future of social care and support service delivery.

For further information, to invite MtM to your group or if you have any questions visit www.mtm.wales, follow us on Twitter - @mtmwales or contact Katie - Katie.cooke@southwales.ac.uk / 07964 407 739.

FareShare Cymru are in Merthyr Tydfil

Are you a not-for-profit organisation that could put good food to good use? At FareShare Cymru we save surplus food and redistribute it to not-for-profit organisations who use it to feed people in need.

Since we started delivering to Merthyr Tydfil the organisations we work with have saved over 5 tonnes of food from being wasted and have used it to make more than 12,256 meals! Is this something your organisation could be part of?



If you are interested in receiving food from FareShare Cymru or if you would like anymore information please contact **Katie** katie@fareshare.cymru



Early support brings success against stress

Merthyr & the Valleys Mind have been delivering an Active Monitoring service to GP Practices over the last two years. This service provides early intervention support to patients showing early signs of mental health problems, including stress and anxiety, bringing down GP waiting times, preventing future demand on wider health service, and supporting patients at a point before they may need medication or longer-term intervention.

Active Monitoring is a guided self-help programme using a CBT approach, and has already proved to have benefitted the majority of those that have used the programme.

One of the patients that received Active Monitoring support through this programme said: "I have improved my symptoms of stress, anxiety and anger and I am confident I will continue to improve as I have a better understanding of what can help me. This service has helped me 100% and I am so glad to have been given the opportunity to attend."

The importance of early intervention and prevention is key to the work the Government and the Minister of Health and Social Services are focussing on. Vaughan Gething said: "We all need to be aware of early warnings of stress and anxiety and knowing there are support services, such as Active Monitoring on the ground should help us seek the help we need. Early intervention and prevention not only relieves pressure on health services; more importantly it gives people back their lives."

The benefits of Active Monitoring outweigh any costs, for example over two years in only one cluster of surgeries (with 1,504 patients taking part in the programme) over £12m of benefits to their wellbeing alone were achieved.

Merthyr & the Valleys Mind CEO, Julian John commented: "We know the benefits our work and our programmes can bring to people, but we need more people to be aware of what services exist in their area. We want people to come forward and ask for help or guidance as soon as they start to feel any distress or any need for mental health support. We take an interest in the person behind the problem, and like many others, we are here to help!"

For more information on our Active Monitoring Service or any of our other services, please contact us on **01685 707480** or email **info@matvmind.org.uk**

"This service has helped me 100% and I am so glad to have been given the opportunity to attend."





Self Advocacy & Co-Production in Action

At Cwm Taf People First we believe that people matter, and that everyone has a valid and valued contribution to make in shaping their communities and the services that they access. Self-Advocacy is at the heart of all we do, and helping individuals to realise, understand and stand up for their personal rights and the rights of their peers forms our mission, as we aim to empower people with learning disabilities to fulfil their true potential. As a member run organisation, people with learning disabilities shape the work we do through a foundation base of true and meaningful co-production in action.



Lynne Evans – Director,
Cwm Taf People First

Under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, 2014, co-production and multi-agency working features as a key priority for organisations working with and for people, providing services to promote wellbeing and increase quality of life. This year we were able to secure Integrated Care Fund Funding to increase the scope and impact of our co-production work, through the creation of the role of an Engagement and Co-Production Coordinator.

Organisationally we have a long history of conducting work co-productively and have really seen how it has helped change and shape services in Social Care, but we know there is still more to do!

We are excited that through this funding we are now able to open up our scope to reach other vulnerable groups within society.

This includes older people, children and young people, parents and carers, alongside our existing work with adults with learning disabilities. Our newly appointed Engagement and Co-Production Coordinator is busy mapping services across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region and identifying best practice examples to help inform other services across the public and third sectors about the importance of co-production and the immense benefits it can have, when done effectively and purposefully, in increasing both individual and community livelihoods.



Additionally, we will be running a series of engagement and co-production workshops across the region to help assist other services to roll out co-production and engage the people and communities they work with in new and innovative ways. The first of these workshops was held at the VAMT offices in November with the series continuing across the region in early 2020.



To find out more about the work of Cwm Taf People First, how you can get involved and about our Engagement and Co-Production project please contact dawn@rctpeoplefirst.org.uk

Drink Wise, Age Well Cwm Taf

Yfed
Doeth
Heneiddio'n
Dda



Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Drink Wise, Age Well is committed to helping people over 50 make healthier choices about alcohol as they age. As project delivery ends in March 2020, we will soon be sharing our learning with others and celebrating the successes of the project and the participants. During this time, you can still contact us using the details below, or alternatively, call DASPA (The Drug and Alcohol Single Point of Access) on 0300 333 0000 who can provide advice, information and an easy route into services for those affected by substance misuse in the Cwm Taf area.

What we offer*

- free, confidential support and advice for older adults, their families and concerned others
- advice and support in the community, including home visits
- free local activities and social opportunities to meet new people, and develop new or existing skills
- free training on starting the conversation, recognising and responding, alcohol's impact as we age and more
- free alcohol awareness sessions for local organisations and employers
- Volunteering opportunities

*As the project ends in March 2020 some aspects of the service may not be available at all times and we will signpost to other services where necessary. Please contact us for more information.

Throughout November 2019 we ran our #GreyMatters campaign to raise awareness of how alcohol affects the brain, including information on Alcohol Related Brain Damage, also known as ARBD. You can find some great resources including factsheets, posters, online courses and videos on our website here: www.drinkwiseagewell.org.uk



FREE Training

We are currently offering free training to front-line workers, volunteers and carers who interact with those over the age of 50. Courses include:

- Introduction to Alcohol Awareness
- Enhanced Alcohol Awareness
- Working with Change Resistant Drinkers
- Substance Misuse in Later Life
- Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD)

For more information or to book your place please call **0800 161 5780** or email: brian.robertson@drinkwiseagewell.org.uk

Get in Touch

This December we hope to help even more older adults make healthier choices about alcohol as they age. If you would like more information about the services we are currently providing please contact us today!

Tel: 0800 161 5780

Email: wales@drinkwiseagewell.org.uk

Web: www.drinkwiseagewell.org.uk

Facebook: @DrinkWiseAgeWellCwmTaf

Twitter: @DWAU_CwmTaf

YouTube: Search 'Drink Wise Age Well'

VAMT AGM

The Annual General Meeting was held on 20th November and attended by 78 people.

The meeting was attended by the Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil, Councillor Howard Barrett and chaired for the first time by Anne Roberts. The meeting received the Annual Report which can be viewed on the VAMT website www.vamt.net

There were three vacancies for the VAMT Board. Paul Gray was re-elected and two new people elected, Michael Ronan and Edward Dawson. They join the six other trustees who were not required to stand this year, namely, Anne Roberts, Helen Thomas, Nicola Mahoney, Kayleigh Nor-Val, Mark Ward and Michelle Jones.

The guest speaker was Helena Herklots CBE, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. Her speech was well received by the audience and there were several questions. She spoke of her ambition to make Wales the best place in the World to grow older. She said we should celebrate the fact that we are living longer and challenge the view that older people are a "burden" on society. She talked about



her strategic aims that she published in April, to end age discrimination, to stop the abuse of older people and promoting changes to enable people to "age well". She spoke of some current issues, in particular, difficulties in getting GP appointments and transport to hospitals, mental health in older people, TV licences, the under-claiming of pension credit and bus passes.

Tackling Loneliness and Isolation

Ryan Bevan was recently appointed as new Tackling Loneliness and Isolation Development Officer for the Cwm Taf area, based at VAMT.

Ryan came into to post at the end of September and is currently travelling across Merthyr and RCT meeting various organisations and community groups introducing himself and establishing how we can work in partnership to address loneliness and isolation within your communities.

Ryan said "The project aims to work in partnership with new and existing community groups, and will also be working to set up new community groups and activities so that the people in the communities served will feel more connected and less isolated. I will be working in partnership with various third sector organisations as well as public and private sector organisations."



If your organisation would like to get involved, if you have issues/concerns or know of anyone who may be facing loneliness and isolation please contact Ryan on **01685 353939 / 07503 954 158**
email: ryan.bevan@vamt.net



Events and Volunteering with Blind Veterans UK

At Blind Veterans UK, we love to involve our local communities. We know that support from the public goes hand-in-hand with the care that we can provide our veterans. With this in mind, we have a number of things that you can get involved with...

We have just launched our 'Do it for Veterans' fundraising campaign. This features a host of options for you to pick and choose from – you can even combine elements into a single fundraising event! These social events can be organised for in your workplace, with family and friends, or even as a public event. They consist of the following, and offer chances for all ages to be involved:

- **Brew Up**
- **Dress Up**
- **Fry Up**
- **Give It Up**
- **Luck Up**
- **Shout Up**
- **Swot Up**

You may feel that doing something before Christmas is too much (although if you're giving up alcohol or chocolates now is a great time to raise some money for your efforts!). Don't worry, there's no time limit on doing these – you can choose an option that suits you when it suits you.

We will provide you with support, including a pack of items relevant to the activity you wish to do. All the information about our 'Do it for Veterans' ideas can be found at www.blindveterans.org.uk/fundraise-for-us/social-events/

We also have a new **March for Veterans 10-mile walk** taking place on **Saturday 21 March 2020**. We will be taking in the sights and sounds of Cardiff and are looking for people to get involved. The early-bird offer ends in January, so don't delay to sign up through our website at www.blindveterans.org.uk/march

Don't fancy walking? We will need volunteers along the route, as well as at the start and finish point in Bute Park. If you'd like to join in by helping out, please contact **Victoria Beech** (Community Events and Fundraising Manager, Wales) on **01492 864 574**. You can also discuss any other fundraising volunteer options with her, like becoming a collecting tin co-ordinator or taking part in a bucket collection at an event or supermarket near you

Change Grow Live

Change Grow Live is a health and social care charity that works with individuals who want to change their lives for the better and achieve positive and life-affirming goals.

Our mission is to help people change the direction of their lives, grow as individuals, and live life to its full potential.

Our vision is to develop, deliver and share a whole person approach that changes society.

We are going through an exciting time at the CGL ACE Project, having received a project extension and recruitment of extra staff due to a restructure, we are ready to carry on with supporting individuals from BME communities across Wales in their journeys to employment. Our highly skilled staff work on a one to one basis with people they are supporting, creating Action Plans specific to that person. The support provided will depend on the individual's needs and can include CV writing, application forms, training or courses and getting voluntary work or work placements for them. We are signing up individuals in your area now.



Change Grow Live



We are also recruiting volunteers to work as Adult Mentors for the individuals that we support. Our volunteers need to be motivated to help people make their life situations better. For the right individuals this can be an extremely rewarding volunteering role, as they see the results of their hard work, when the individuals they support are able to progress in their employment journeys.

For more information or if you have an individual to refer, who identifies as having a BME background, is aged 25+ and is long term unemployed or economically inactive, then please get in touch. We welcome volunteer referrals in all areas across Wales.

Address: CGL ACE Project, 3rd Floor, 23 St Andrews Crescent, Cardiff, CF10 3DB

Phone: 02920 221936

Email: AceVolunteering@cgl.org.uk

MBE for Gary

Gary Davies from Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association was recently awarded an MBE for services to the community, presented to him at Buckingham Palace by His Royal Highness, the Duke of Cambridge.

Gary is one of the founding members of the Angling Association, which was formed in 1966 and has gone from strength to strength. Gary was also very involved in the Communities First programme in Dowlais. Gary proudly attended Buckingham palace with his family Eileen, Wayne, Carmen and granddaughter Caerwyn.



@ SMTCymru

Tel: 01685 353999

Email: hm@smt.org.uk



RECONNECT 50+

Funded via the ICF Community Capacity Grant Scheme

Don't feel lonely or isolated

If you need help to get you Reconnected – contact us on 01685 353997, and ask for Helen. We have Reconnect 50+ groups running across Merthyr Tydfil.

If you want to call in and have a chat about our 1-1 Mentoring scheme or just have a cup of tea or coffee with us, you're very welcome.



The Hub – Reconnect
Mondays 10:00am-12:00pm
in the basement of Hope Chapel, Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre

Homemade Christmas Tree made by the Hub on display in St David's Church



Bedlingog Reconnect meet on **Wednesdays** at Mary Street Gospel Hall **10:30am-12:00pm**. Join Courtney and team doing different crafts or just come along and chat.



Freda and team run a group in Ty Bryn Seion, Dowlais on **Wednesdays 10:30am-12:00pm**



Louise and team run a group in Calon Las Community Hub, Gurnos on **Thursdays 10:30am – 12:00pm**



Back to Baking with Julie is just one of the activities on offer

Gelligaer & Merthyr Tydfil Common

The Tirwedd y Comin Project is a two-year project, led by Gelligaer & Merthyr Commoners Association which is working to address anti-social behavior issues and adopt a sustainable management of natural resources approach to the management of the common.

The Common is a CADW designated Historic Landscape and is unique in its value to the rural communities which surround it, from an environmental, social and economic perspective. The quality of habitat, biodiversity and grazing upon the Common is being degraded due to a number of issues which ultimately have their basis in negative human interaction with the landscape. The project employs a countryside ranger and project administrator who are delivering the project on the ground.

What is Common Land?

The concept of common land goes centuries, individuals or 'Commoners' were given the right by the lord of the manor to collect firewood, fish, graze animals, cut peat, gather bracken for bedding and other rights subject to local need. Various pieces of government legislation have formalized these traditions.

Who owns Common Land?

- All common land is owned. Owners can be private individuals, organisations or public bodies. 8% of Wales is Common Land

Interesting Facts

- Common land is crucial to the Welsh agricultural economy
- A large percentage of common land in Wales is designated as important sites for nature conservation (SSSI or SACs)



Dos and don'ts on Common Land

- Only those with 'rights' can graze animals on the common
- It is illegal to drive on common land without the landowner's permission – illegal off-roading causes erosion, disturbs wildlife and has resulted in injury to grazing animals. This offence is enforced by the Police either by issuing a fine or the confiscation of the motor vehicle.
- All common land is deemed 'Open Access' under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act, this means members of the public can freely access the common on foot. Open access land is marked on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps as yellow shaded areas.
- Dogs – It's always good practice (and a legal requirement on 'open access' land) to keep your dog on a lead around farm animals and horses. Dog mess should be bagged and binned!
- Roads – There often roads across common land. Commons are predominantly unfenced, meaning grazing animals roam free. Drivers should always be vigilant and drive slowly
- Fly tipping and littering not only looks unsightly but causes significant harm to wildlife, grazing animals, members of the public and farmers. It is also a criminal offence.

It is important to remember that Gelligaer & Merthyr Common like all commons and uplands across Wales is a living and working landscape, it should be respected by all that use it.

continued on back page...

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Opportunities to get involved and stay updated

The ranger for the common has established a volunteer group which meets regular to undertake litter picking and other countryside skills on the common. To sign up to receive updates regarding volunteer events, please contact the project team: **volunteering@gmcommon.org**

You can also follow us on
Twitter: @GMCommon



This newsletter has been published by Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil, Voluntary Action Centre, 89 – 90 Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8UH. Telephone: (01685) 353900
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The views expressed in this edition of Inform are not necessarily those of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.
Croesawir erthyglau nail ai'n ddwyieithog neu'n uniaith Gymraeg.

The closing date for articles for the next edition (March 2020) is 21 February 2020.